

1. Chemical and Biological Activities ^{46a}

Against this background, the Central Intelligence Agency entered into a special agreement with the Army on a project which the CIA codenamed MKNAOMI. The original purpose of MKNAOMI is difficult to determine. Few written records were prepared during its 18-year existence; most of the documents relating to it have been destroyed; and persons with knowledge of its early years have either died or have been unable to recall much about their association with the project. However, it is fair to conclude from the types of weapons developed for the CIA, and from the extreme security associated with MKNAOMI, that the possibility of first use of biological weapons by the CIA was contemplated.

The Army agreed that the Special Operations Division (SOD) at Fort Detrick would assist the CIA in developing, testing, and maintaining biological agents and delivery systems. By this agreement, CIA acquired the knowledge, skill, and facilities of the Army to develop biological weapons suited for CIA use. In 1967, the CIA summarized MKNAOMI objectives:

- a. To provide for a covert support base to meet clandestine operational requirements.
- b. To stockpile severely incapacitating and lethal materials for the specific use of TSD [Technical Services Division].
- c. To maintain in operational readiness special and unique items for the dissemination of biological and chemical materials.

^{46a} See Chapter XVI.

d. To provide for the required surveillance, testing, upgrading, and evaluation of materials and items in order to assure absence of defects and complete predictability of results to be expected under operational conditions.⁴⁷

In reviewing the records and testimony of SOD personnel, it is easy, for the most part, to distinguish SOD's work for the Army from its work for the CIA, even though very few SOD scientists knew of the CIA connection. For example, the CIA personnel who worked with SOD were identified as military officers from the fictitious Staff Support Group, whose interest in SOD was markedly different from the Army's. The CIA was careful to ensure that its moneys were transferred to SOD to cover the cost of CIA projects and the few existing SOD records indicate which projects were to be charged against the funds received from "P-600," the accounting designation for CIA funds.

SOD's work for the Army from 1952 until the early 1960s was primarily to assess the vulnerability of sensitive installations, such as the Pentagon, air bases, and subway systems, to biological sabotage by an enemy. In order to conduct these tests, SOD personnel would develop small, easily disguised devices—such as spray cannisters and spray pens—containing harmless biological agents. SOD personnel would surreptitiously gain access to the installation, leaving the devices to release the biological agent. SOD personnel would then monitor its spread throughout the installation. In this way, SOD could determine how vulnerable the installation was to sabotage of this kind and could advise those charged with security of the installation on counter-measures.

Although the CIA was interested in the kinds of delivery devices which SOD could make for delivery of the biological agents, CIA projects were distinct because they involved the mating of delivery systems to lethal or incapacitating biological agents, instead of harmless agents used in vulnerability tests. The CIA would ask SOD to produce a delivery system and a compatible biological agent—a request not made by the Army until the early 1960s.

SOD developed pills containing several different biological agents which could remain potent for weeks or months, and dart guns and darts coated with biological agents. SOD also developed a special gun for firing darts coated with a chemical that could incapacitate a guard dog in order to allow CIA agents to knock out the guard dog silently, enter an installation, and return the dog to consciousness when leaving. SOD scientists were unable to develop a similar incapacitant for humans.

SOD on occasion physically transferred biological agents in "bulk" form, various delivery devices, and most importantly, delivery devices containing biological agents, to CIA personnel. Although none of the witnesses before the Select Committee could recall any transfer of such materials for actual use by the CIA, evidence available to the Committee indicates that the CIA attempted to use the material. It is fair to conclude that biological agents and delivery devices prepared at Fort Detrick and transferred to the Staff Support Group were carried

⁴⁷ Memorandum from Chief, TSD/Biological Branch to Chief, TSD, "MKNAOMI: Funding, Objectives, and Accomplishments," 10/18/67, p. 1.

by CIA agents in attempted assassinations of foreign leaders. However, the Committee found no evidence that such material was ever in fact used against a person by the CIA.

By the early 1960s, the Army also became interested in the type of work SOD was doing for the CIA. The Army apparently decided that this type of surreptitious delivery device might be useful to Special Forces units in guerrilla warfare. SOD developed special bullets containing poison darts which could be fired, with little noise, from standard military weapons and small portable devices capable of spraying biological agents into the air which would form lethal clouds. Ultimately, the Army stockpiled a quantity of these bullets, but never transferred them to field units.

SOD developed another capability according to existing records which, so far as the Committee could determine, was never tapped by Army or by the CIA. Whereas most SOD work was devoted to biological weapons which would kill one individual noiselessly and with almost no trace of which would kill or incapacitate a small group. SOD did research the possibilities of large-scale covert use of biological weapons. SOD scientists prepared memoranda, which were passed to the CIA, detailing what diseases were common in what areas of the world so that covert use of biological weapons containing these diseases could easily go undetected. SOD researched special delivery devices for these biological agents, but it never mated such delivery devices with biological agents.

In addition to CIA interest in biological weapons for use against humans, it also asked SOD to study use of biological agents against crops and animals. In its 1967 memorandum, the CIA stated:

Three methods and systems for carrying out a covert attack against crops and causing severe crop loss have been developed and evaluated under field conditions. This was accomplished in anticipation of a requirement which was later developed but was subsequently scrubbed just prior to putting into action.

2. Termination

All the biological work ended in 1969. Shortly after taking office, President Nixon ordered the staff of the National Security Council to review the chemical and biological weapons program of the United States. On November 25, 1969, he stated that the United States renounced the use of any form of biological weapons that kill or incapacitate. He further ordered the disposal of existing stocks of bacteriological weapons.

On February 14, 1970, the President clarified the extent of his earlier order and indicated that toxins—chemicals that are not living organisms but are produced by living organisms—were considered biological weapons subject to his previous directive. The Defense Department duly carried out the Presidential directive according to the instructions and supervision of the National Security Council staff. However, a CIA scientist acquired from SOD personnel at Fort Detrick approximately 11 grams of shellfish toxin, a quantity which was approximately one-third of the total world production and which was sufficient to prepare tens of thousands of darts. This toxin, a known danger

if inhaled, swallowed, or injected, was then stored in a little-used laboratory at the CIA where its presence went undetected for five years.

The transfer from SOD to the CIA resulted in a major quantity of the toxin being retained by an agency in a manner which clearly violated the President's order. The evidence to the Committee established that the decision to transfer and to retain the shellfish toxin was not made by, or known to, high-level officials of either the Defense Department or the CIA. The Director of the CIA was told of the possibility of retaining the toxin, but he rejected that course of action. The Committee found that the decision to keep the toxin, in direct and unmistakable contradiction of a widely announced Presidential decision, was made by a few individuals in the CIA and SOD.

Nevertheless, the history of MKNAOMI and the atmosphere surrounding it undoubtedly contributed to the mistaken belief of these individuals that they were not directly affected by the President's decision. The MKNAOMI project itself was contrary to United States policy since 1925 and to Presidential announcement since 1943, for it contemplated a first use of biological weapons by the CIA—albeit in the context of small covert operations. Moreover, because of the sensitive nature of MKNAOMI, these scientists gave their superiors little written record of their work and received little or no written guidance. The National Security Council staff, charged by the President with determining what U.S. policy should be, did not discover MKNAOMI in the course of its study and did not, therefore, consider the possibility that the CIA had biological weapons or biological agents. The CIA employee who claims to have made the decision, on his own, to retain the toxin received no written instructions to destroy them. Kept outside the National Security Council's study, the employee had to rely only on the newspaper account of the President's announcement and on his own interpretation of it.